

### In memory of Martin Walsh, 1947-1977

by Chuck Kleinhans

from *Jump Cut*, no. 16, 1977, p. 39

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Soon after we started JUMP CUT four years ago, Martin Walsh wrote a letter encouraging us. From that beginning Martin was a regular contributor of articles, a friend and supportive critic of the magazine. We published much of his best work — articles that make substantial contributions to radical film criticism: an extended [critique of the Straub/Huillet films](#) (JUMP CUT 4) and a detailed analysis of their film [MOSES AND AARON](#) (JC 12/13), a study of [Losey's version of Brecht's GALILEO](#) (JC 7), [Antonioni's THE PASSENGER](#) (JC 8), a critique of Noel Burch's theories (JC 10/11) and a [reconsideration of Rossellini](#) (JC 15). The general direction of his critical work was aimed at exploring Brecht's influence on political filmmaking, a subject he planned to explore in a book-length study. Reading over his articles in JUMP CUT, *Monogram* and other film publications, I'm constantly impressed by his insight and rigor. Martin was serious about thinking, and I believe that was a strong part of what attracted him to Brecht. And like Brecht, he combined his commitment to thought with a rich comic sense of life as those who knew him personally witnessed daily.

A British citizen with degrees from Exeter, Kent, and the Slade School of Fine Art, Martin began teaching film at the University of Western Ontario in 1972. From training, temper, and talent he brought a special set of interests and skills to his work as teacher and critic. An accomplished photographer and collector of original art and kitsch, he had a strong appreciation of the visual craft of film. His house overflowed with books on art, film, music, literature, and records ranging from classical to rock — all reflecting his wide-ranging intellect. For Martin studying and teaching film served as a place of synthesis for his talents and concerns. That synthesis was unique. While he shared many interests with other young British film critics, living in Canada he developed independently of the English scene. He wanted Canada to

develop its own national film studies and actively participated in professional organizations in Canada and helped in founding the new journal *Cine-Tracts* which he hoped could build Canadian film culture.

Martin and I corresponded quite a bit before we finally met at a film conference. I immediately liked him, and we had the chance to meet again several times, becoming stronger friends each time. We also argued a lot. Part of that was due to the inevitable difference between editor and writer, but mostly it was political. We differed, but we also fiercely believed that the other's ideas were important, and it became a healthy criticism that helped each of us grow. Martin taught me a lot.

In early July I visited Martin in London, Ontario. Having just been hired to teach film at Kent, he was packing to return to England. He glowed with the happiness of someone who is reaching a new stage in life. I left with promises to visit him the next summer in England, and I drove on thinking of how fine and right his life was, and how good his future looked. That made the news of his critical injury when struck by a car while cycling a day later all the more terrible. He died days later.

We have his critical writings. They are a substantial contribution to developing a radical political film culture. But we have lost the man — his humor, his political commitment, his intellectual seriousness and rigor, and his generosity. Martin gave much of himself to many people. Those of us who knew him and received that gift treasure it as consolation for our loss.

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